



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

News Release

Pacific Islands External Affairs Office

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Draft Recovery Plan for Two Endangered Mariana Plants Released for Public Review

A draft plan that outlines steps needed to recover two endangered plants found in the Mariana Islands was released today by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for public review and comment. The two plant species – *Nesogenes rotensis* and *Osmoxylon mariannense* – are found only on the island of Rota in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The draft recovery plan includes a detailed strategy on how to enhance the populations of the two plants so that both species can be downlisted to threatened status and eventually removed from the federal list of threatened and endangered species.

“Although there are only a few individuals left, we hope implementation of this plan will help reverse the decline of these two plant species leading them away from the brink of extinction and toward recovery,” said Patrick Leonard, field supervisor for the Fish and Wildlife Service’s Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office.

The draft recovery plan states that the species will be considered for downlisting when the following criteria are achieved and maintained for a minimum of 5 consecutive years.

- A total of two populations of each species are naturally reproducing, stable, or increasing in numbers. Each population of *Nesogenes rotensis* must consist of at least 300 mature, reproducing individuals and for each population of *Osmoxylon mariannense* there must be at least 100 mature reproducing individuals.
- Sufficient habitat is protected and managed to achieve the identified population goals.
- Management and control of nonnative species by local, Commonwealth, and federal authorities are demonstrated to be successful to achieve the identified population goals.

Specific recovery actions included in the draft plan are: coordinate and monitor recovery efforts; address the factors affecting viability of the wild populations; monitor the remaining populations, establish new populations and increase existing populations; and provide educational and informational opportunities to build public support for conservation.

Nesogenes rotensis has only two known populations of 15-20 plants each while *Osmoxylon mariannense* has eight known individuals scattered throughout the cloud swept plateau of western Rota known as the Sabana. The small geographical area or restricted

distributions of these two species also make them subject to extinction from naturally occurring events such as typhoons.

These two plant species were federally listed as endangered in 2004 primarily due to human activities that alter native vegetation and habitat, limited distribution, and extremely low population numbers. Examples of such human activities are agriculture; ranching; nonnative plant and animal introductions; resort and beach park development in the coastal habitat of *Nesogenes rotensis*; and road construction and maintenance in the Sabana habitat of *Osmoxylon mariannense*.

Nesogenes rotensis is an herbaceous plant in the Verbena family with small, coarsely toothed leaves and small white flowers. *Osmoxylon mariannense* is a spindly, soft-wooded tree in the Ginseng family that can reach 33 feet in height.

Delisting requirements for each species include four naturally reproducing, stable, or increasing populations for a period of 5 consecutive years. In addition, a post-delisting 5-year monitoring plan will be developed to ensure the ongoing recovery of the species and the continuing effectiveness of management actions.

The availability of the draft recovery plan for a 60-day public comment period was announced in the *Federal Register* on April 25th. Copies of the draft recovery plan are available through the Fish and Wildlife Service's website at <http://pacificislands.fws.gov> or by calling the Fish and Wildlife Service's Honolulu office at 808 792 9400. Written comments may be submitted until June 26, 2006 to the Field Supervisor, Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office, 300 Ala Moana Boulevard, Room 3-122, Box 50088, Honolulu, HI 96850.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.